



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***UNFRAMING JOHN DONNE'S TRANSGRESSIVE POETRY IN LIGHT OF
BAKHTIN'S DIALOGIC THEORIES***

REFAAT R. ALAREER

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**UNFRAMING JOHN DONNE'S TRANSGRESSIVE POETRY IN LIGHT OF
BAKHTIN'S DIALOGIC THEORIES**

By

REFAAT R. ALAREER

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfillments of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

August 2017

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DEDICATION

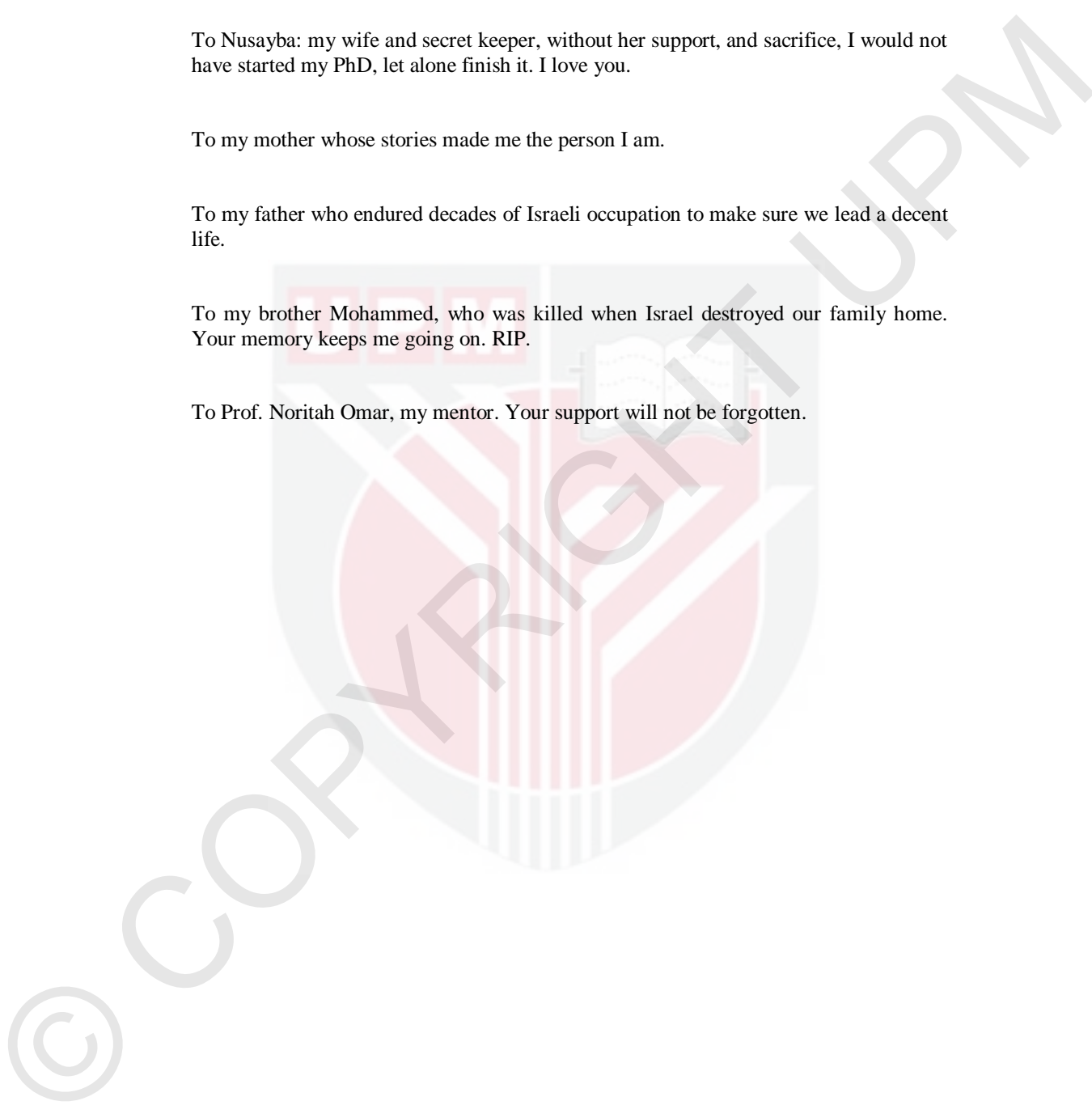
To Nusayba: my wife and secret keeper, without her support, and sacrifice, I would not have started my PhD, let alone finish it. I love you.

To my mother whose stories made me the person I am.

To my father who endured decades of Israeli occupation to make sure we lead a decent life.

To my brother Mohammed, who was killed when Israel destroyed our family home. Your memory keeps me going on. RIP.

To Prof. Noritah Omar, my mentor. Your support will not be forgotten.



TRIBUTE TO JOHN DONNE

I, spinning like a compass in my grave,
Often there would pause and deeply ponder
On what you people don't get, and wonder
At what you guys just did and gave
Why is it a folly what you get not?
O! Who says 'The Flea' is meant to seduce?
It rather awareness in you produce
Why is it smartness what you only got?
Aye, this is my canon lying hither,
Let readers read, then pray and pray and hope
For I am done, more famous than a pope
No matter what you do to hinder.
This you think my verse defames and murders,
Verily has won me more supporters.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**UNFRAMING JOHN DONNE’S TRANSGRESSIVE POETRY IN LIGHT OF
BAKHTIN’S DIALOGIC THEORIES**

By

REFAAT R. ALAREER

August 2017

Chairman : Associate Professor Noritah Omar, PhD
Faculty : Modern Languages and Communication

John Donne’s famous poem “The Bait” parodies, and intertexts with, Christopher Marlowe’s “The Passionate Shepherd”. This couplet establishes Donne’s poetic experimentations: he’s calling for “some” not “all”, adding that his adventures are “new”. This thesis aims to explore John Donne’s poetic productions, which for centuries remained in the margins of the English canon, in their attempts to undermine and subvert existing modes of versification and the socio-political norms they represent. For that, Donne was subjected to negative framing and marginalisation from his contemporaries. Therefore, my thesis began unravelling early and modern reception of Donne in the light of New Historicism’s assumptions as a philosophical framework. In addition, this thesis examines Donne’s poetic explorations in the light of Russian formalist critic Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogic theories of parody, carnival, and polyphony, which present particularly rich potential analytical tools for the study of emerging, anti-establishment literary texts. I argue that Donne’s positioning himself in direct opposition to the early Neo-classicists shaped the way he thought of and approached poetry in both form and content. John Donne’s parodic poetry helped him engage in a dialogue with his age and beyond and create poems with multiple-voices that gave his poetry the timeless appeal. Further, close readings of selected Donne poems reveal that he was offering alternative modes of versification and a different worldview from the one prevalent at his time and thus subverting monologic dominant poetic styles and systematised poetry by bringing to the poem carnivalesque discourse, ideas, and people often denied access under the pretext of etiquette and rules of decorum. In addition, Donne presents a role model for emerging writers resisting censorship and a prime example of Bakhtin’s concepts of addressivity and answerability: his poetry is usually addressed to posterity, whom Donne calls “future rebels”, and anticipates and generates future responses hence keeping it both universal and timeless. Therefore, my thesis concludes that Donne’s poetry invites a dialogic reading on three major levels: 1) Donne demonstrates Bakhtin’s perception of literature as a dynamic which refutes the existing canon as a fixed reality; 2) Donne’s poetry engenders dialogue between two opposing worldviews regarding poetry writing:

the mainstream and the experimental, disturbing the established aesthetics of poetry of his time; and 3) the multiplicity of voices in Donne' poetry illustrate Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism and polyphony. In brief, John Donne might be the first serious attempt to indulge in bringing poetry from the towers of the courts as an elite practice to the public.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

RUNGKAIAN SAJAK TRANSGRESIF JOHN DONNE DARI SUDUT TEORI DIALOGIK BAKHTIN

Oleh

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Pengerusi : Profesor Madya Noritah Omar, PhD
Fakulti : Bahasa Moden dan Komunikasi

Sajak terkenal John Donne bertajuk “The Bait” merupakan sebuah parodi dan interteks daripada sajak Christopher Marlowe’s “The Passionate Shepherd”. Kuplet ini menjadi satu percubaan puitika yang dianggap baharu, terutamanya apabila Donne tidak lagi menghadirkan ungkapan-ungkapan yang bersifat pukul-rata, Umpamanya, beliau menggunakan perkataan *some* (beberapa) dan bukan *all* (semua). Dalam konteks, tesis ini bertujuan untuk meneroka cetusan puitika John Donne, yang selama berabad-abad dipinggirkan daripada karya agung Inggeris. Peminggiran ini sejajar dengan usaha untuk menafikan gaya penggubahan puisi serta nilai-nilai sosiopolitik yang muncul pada ketika itu. Justeru, sumbangan Donne telah diperkecilkan dengan dakwaan negatif dan seterusnya dipinggirkan daripada “sastera” pada zamannya. Sehubungan itu, tesis ini dimulakan dengan pembacaan semula terhadap resepsi awal serta moden terhadap sajak Donne, dengan memanfaatkan idea-idea Pensejarahan Baharu (*New Historicism*) sebagai kerangka filosofikal. Sesungguhnya, inti pati tesis ini ialah meneliti penerokaan puitika oleh Donne, dengan memanfaatkan teori-teori dialogika seperti intertekstualiti, parodi, karnival dan polifoni oleh Makhail Bakhtin, seorang pengkritik formalis Rusia. Kesemua teori tersebut dianggap berpotensi untuk dimanfaatkan sebagai alat analitikal bagi sebuah kajian yang mengkaji kemunculan gaya baharu yang bersifat *anti-establishment*, sebagaimana kajian ini. Tesis ini menghujahkan bahawa Donne telah berupaya menempatkan dirinya pada kedudukan yang bertentangan dengan golongan Neo-klasik, melalui pemikiran serta pendekatannya terhadap isi dan bentuk sajak. Sajak-sajak parodi karya John Donne didapati mampu mewujudkan dialog dengan zamannya, serta zaman-zaman yang selepasnya, selain menukilkan sajak-sajak yang beraneka suara. Kesemua ini menjadikan sajak-sajak Donne sesuai sepanjang zaman. Seterusnya, bacaan rapi terhadap sajak-sajak terpilihnya juga memperlihatkan bahawa Donne turut menawarkan mod alternatif dalam penggubahan puisi, selain memberikan pandangan alam yang berbeza daripada yang rata-rata menjadi pegangan pada zamannya. Hal ini dengan sendirinya mencabar gaya puitika yang memperakukan hanya satu suara secara dominan atau

monologic dominant, dan mendombrak sistem yang direka dalam seni penggubahan sajak. Ini dilakukan dengan memperkenalkan dunia persajakan kepada wacana, idea serta manusia yang bersifat karnivalistik, yang selama ini disembunyikan atas nama etika dan adab. Di samping itu, Donne sendiri hadir sebagai tokoh ikutan bagi para penyajak yang menentang penapisan. Selain itu, sajak-sajak beliau turut memanifestasikan konsep *addressivity* dan *answerability* oleh Bakhtin. Ternyata sajak-sajak Donne dinukilkan untuk generasi masa hadapan yang dinamakannya sebagai “pemberontak masa hadapan”, selain mampu meramal serta mencetuskan reaksi masa depan. Kesemua ini menjadikan sajak Donne bersifat sejagat serta sesuai sepanjang zaman. Secara keseluruhannya, tesis ini menyimpulkan bahawa sajak-sajak Donne mengundang pembacaan yang bersifat dialogik pada tiga tahap yang utama, iaitu: 1) mendemonstrasikan persepsi Bakhtin tentang sastera yang dinamik, yang sekali gus menafikan kemutlakan karya agung; 2) mencipta dialog antara dua pandangan alam yang saling bertentangan berkaitan sajak; yang satu bersifat arus perdana, manakala yang satu lagi pula bersifat eksperimental yang menggugah pemahaman tentang sajak pada ketika itu; dan 3) menggambarkan konsep dialogisme dan polifoni oleh Bakhtin melalui kepelbagaian suara yang dilaungkan dalam sajak-sajaknya. Ringkasnya, tidak keterlaluan jika dikatakan bahawa John Donne merupakan antara penyajak pertama yang secara serius berusaha untuk menghakis sifat elitis dan sekali gus merakyatkan sajak.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 25 August 2017 to conduct the final examination of Refaat R. Alareer on his thesis entitled "Unframing John Donne's Transgressive Poetry in Light of Bakhtin's Dialogic Theories" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

But why are Originals so few? not because the writer's harvest is over, the great reapers of antiquity having left nothing to be gleaned after them; nor because the human mind's teeming time is past, or because it is incapable of putting forth unprecedented births; but because illustrious examples engross, prejudice, and intimidate. They engross our attention, and so prevent a due inspection of ourselves; they *prejudice* our Judgment in favour of their abilities, and so *lessen* the sense of our own; and they *intimidate* us with the splendor of their renown, and thus under diffidence *bury* our strength. [emphasis added]

Edward Young (9)—“Conjectures on Original Composition”

[B]ut literary criticism, as an art, always was and always will be an elitist phenomenon.

Harold Bloom (*The Western Canon* 16)

Donne himself, for not being understood, would perish...Donne, for not keeping of accent, deserved hanging.

Ben Jonson (3, 15)

1.1 Background of the Study

1.1.1 Originality and the Canon

Edward Young's observation, first quote above, which he made in 1759, gives us an early yet remarkably profound insight into the mainstream politics and poetics of what made, and still makes, great, or canonical, literature and what does not. Young believes that there are many talented writers or “originals... [producing] unprecedented” literature but are intimidated and usually go unnoticed because of the politics of the age they live in. Young lays the blame for that directly on what he describes as “the great reapers of antiquity” and the “illustrious examples”, or, more precisely, established canonical writers and critics. While Young does not question the authority these critics possess, he still believes it is this very authority that is to be blamed for burying promising writers seeking originality by intimidating and denigrating them, negatively influencing readers' appreciation. By virtue of their fame and position as great “reapers”, canonical critics smother auspicious writers and turn their talents into pieces preventing them from seeking originality and thus doom them to remain outside the canon. What is equally important here is the notion that, according to Young, the leading critics tend to

frame readers as well into believing texts should only be written in a particular method to qualify as good texts. Readers' judgement, therefore, is prejudiced against particular writers or texts even if they are original. Young puts this concisely, "[critics] engross our attention, and so prevent a due inspection," (9). Young's comment could be one of the earliest critical reviews of what makes the canon, for he seems to be seeking a rereading of English literary history in search of writers who were buried or prejudiced and to put an end to or at least expose biased criticism. This early attempt at resurrecting "buried" writers mark the beginning of a long journey of rereading both canonical texts, habitually described as high literature, and non-canonical texts often dismissed as low literature.

Conventionally, the "canon" is the "traditional core" of literary works that are usually "deemed 'great', 'valuable', 'universal' and 'timeless', and hence worthy of continued academic study," (Green and LeBihan 272). These texts are "most frequently and fully discussed by literary critics and historians" and "most likely to be included in anthologies and in the syllabi of college courses," (Abrams and Harpham 41). However, the emphasis on a particular set of literary works and promoting them as high literature means that only one way of artistic expression is permitted; this results in institutional artistic violence against budding writers and learners (Wilden lvii–lviii). In brief,

[i]n recent decades the phrase "literary canon" has come to designate...those authors who, by a cumulative consensus of critics, scholars, and teachers, have come to be widely recognized as "major," and to have written works often hailed as literary classics. (Abrams and Harpham 41)

The question many modern critics have started to raise since the beginning of twentieth century is the fact that this "consensus" is by no means purely objective. The classification between what for a long time has been called high literature and low literature, Abrams and Harpham agree with Young and emphasise, is evidence of "historical injustices" across gender, race, and class (199–200). In his book "The Western Canon", Harold Bloom scrutinises the canon, which he believes began in the middle of the eighteenth century (the Neo-Classical Age), and defines it as "a choice among texts struggling with one another for survival" but according to Bloom this "choice" could be made by certain "dominant social groups, institutions of education, [or] traditions of criticism," (*The Western Canon* 20). Such modern readings of the canon have started very important critical literary movements that have engaged in discussions to reconsider the very term "canon" itself, question the so-called cumulative consensus, and reread literary history in search for a better understanding of the dynamics of power and authority that had determined the silence of a great many writers such as John Donne.

Bloom, furthermore, attempts to forsake the common distinction between good and bad books or high and low literature. He questions the fundamental principles behind such classification: literary criticism. Literary criticism is viewed by Bloom as an elitist activity; "literary criticism, as an art, always was and always will be an elitist

phenomenon” from which neither “democratic education” nor “societal improvement” will be gained (*The Western Canon* 17–18). The canon is literary critics attempting to institutionalise art. Who are these classical critics after all? Are not they on the king’s or queen’s payroll and expect a salary, gifts, and privileges from their patrons? Bloom, unlike Eliot who only blamed the narrow training critics like Johnson had had (Eliot, *Selected Essays*. 291), views such attempts by critics to purposefully let certain literary texts die as political since they subvert readers’ expectation of particular texts and create readers who think that “literature is best explained as a mystification promoted by bourgeois institutions,” (*The Western Canon* 17). Still, Bloom denounces both the extreme defences of and extreme attacks on the Western canon because he considers them “so heavily politicised” and not “truly literary” judgements (*The Western Canon* 21–22). Bloom cites Alstair Fowler’s belief that in each era some texts are more canonical than others, not for political reasons, but simply due to changes in literary taste (*The Western Canon* 20). In a word, while Bloom admits the elitist nature of the Western canon in the sense that it is founded upon selectively strict artistic criteria, he refuses to accept that the whole formation of the canon is ideological (*The Western Canon* 21–22).

To get a broader range of literary works included in the canon means revisiting originality and engaging in a process of a liberalisation of the canon (Green and LeBihan 272). Further, that, which I believe is equally if not more important, means unravelling how the marginalised voices resisted and contested literary authority, how they pushed their voices amidst a torrent of criticism and negative frames, and what literary techniques they developed not merely to survive but to resurface later in time. A crucial premise here is Patricia Waugh’s assertion that classical or canonical writings function primarily by “suppressing” other voices by focusing on the dominant god-like voice (Waugh 6). Thus, voices that reject the mainstream trends in versification or at least do not abide by some or all of them are banished. These hushed voices usually help revolutionise literary movements, significantly push the boundaries of conventionally fixed norms, and hence increase our understanding of their age.

A study of literary resistance vis-a-vis marginalisation, which is the major concern of this thesis, is crucial since it brings to the surface/centre the voices silenced by elite discourse and state-controlled definitions of good literature that limit, frame, and mute dissent. This thesis, then, is part of the ongoing efforts to support artistic dissent and revive voices that have been silenced for their transgressive literary productions. According to Wilden, “guerrilla rhetoric” as “effective dissent” is required to help us put an end to the oppressive and restrictive frames of the patriarchal institutions. Wilden elaborates:

a line of defense is not enough; the victims must take the offensive. What is required – at this admittedly minimal level – is a GUERRILLA RHETORIC. And, for a guerrilla rhetoric, you must know what your enemy knows, why and how he knows it, and how to contest him on any ground. (lvii–lviii)

Seeking to identify literary tools of resistance literature, this study aims to enable emerging transgressive voices and artists to contest dominant narratives of their times. These appealing literary techniques, again, had enabled such literary texts to reach out to more audiences across time and place. The voices of originality and unprecedented literary productions, therefore, reveal techniques they adopted to resist any acts of censorship practiced by the mainstream institutions.

Oxford Dictionary defines “originality” as “the quality of being new and interesting in a way that is different from anything that has existed before” (Oxford Dictionary). The key words are “new” and “different”. Now that we can read modern and post-modern literature with joy and awe, we think that great experimental texts and authors such as Donne, Aphra Behn, or Laurence Sterne were always appreciated for their daring artistic expressions. That cannot be further from the truth, for originals, as Young states, have often been intimidated, discriminated against, and framed (9). Indeed, “difference” or originality seems to have been subjected to bias and thus resisted or rejected.

This basic dictionary definition of originality, however, is lacking when it comes to discussing literary originality. Abrams and Harpham define originality as literary works that “signify the inauguration by a writer of an unprecedented subject or theme or form or style... resulting in literary productions that are entirely new,” (16, 48). Edward Said, however, rejects originality which includes a total “displacement” reaction that determines pushing all others into “second place” or even “out of sight” (*The World, the Text, and the Critic* 129). This common concept of originality, resourceful though it is, could be a violent substitution of a particular experience; consequently, Said promotes a more comprehensive definition of originality that contains three equal forces interplaying with each other: combination, displacement, and returning (*The World, the Text, and the Critic* 129). Said implies that any attempt to originality needs to be aware of its historical precedents; a writer ought to be aware of and familiar with old trends in order to bring about changes. In other words, total displacement of past experiences does not entail originality as the writer needs to negotiate with the past sometimes by returning to it and other times by simply combining experiences.

Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) well before Said had emphasised that great writers engage in a dialogue with the worlds of others, and also create dialogic texts that promote an open outlook to the world that is always in the making (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 205). Nevertheless, while Said makes the past a point of reference, a necessary practice to the maturity of the original author, Bakhtin makes the future as the modernist writer’s reference. A modernist writer, Bakhtin believes, is always in a dialogue with future readers and readings of his/her texts (*Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* 170). While the past is not ignored altogether in Bakhtin, it is the future addressivity that an innovative author needs to look forward to.

I believe John Donne had voiced a similar concern regarding the interdependent relationships with others. Donne spelled out his belief in the necessity of all members and aspects of life complementing each other in his very famous pronouncement:

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less...; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee. (Donne, *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* 83)

And in its turn, this no-man-is-an-island concept is also Bakhtinian. For Bakhtin, an utterance or a text is dialogically (consisting of different and competing worldviews) linked to past utterances or texts; likewise, future utterances play a role in shaping previous ones in the sense that a writer positions himself or herself in the form of a dialogue with future generations of readers and writers (Morris 5). Donne cannot imagine a world in which individuals function by themselves, let alone be understood because we are “involved in mankind”, meaning we are naturally dialogic, that is interrelated with others in more ways than we can imagine. Anything “about ‘me’, in isolation from the many voices that constitute me and with which I speak, will be *essentially faulty*,” (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* xxv). That is why it is the monologically (consisting of one worldview) absolute isolation of Renaissance thought that Donne was struggling against.

This thread that links Donne to Bakhtin, though subtle sometimes, provides, if properly examined, a fresher look and deeper insights into understanding Donne's banished poetic contributions to the body of English Literature and world literature by extension. Contrary to common belief, I argue, Donne was not always on the defensive against the mainstream negative reception of his poetry. Donne seems to have adopted what we now call Bakhtinian rhetoric of resistance to contest the institutionalised violence against him as an emerging poet writing against the grain. At the heart of Bakhtin's theories lies an emphasis on the rhetoric of resistance or the rhetoric of minorities. Consequently, applying Bakhtinian concepts to analyse Donne's poetry will enable us to further comprehend how and why Donne managed to survive all these centuries of negative framing and even thrive in the age of modernism three hundred years later, despite 17th century critics' and poets' attempts to deem Donne unfit for writing poetry. This is an attempt to understand, using Bakhtin's theories, Donnean poetic experimentations, which, despite condemnation by his contemporaries, managed centuries later to elevate him to “unprecedented heights of reputation and popularity,” (Haskin xxiii).

1.1.2 John Donne and Early Reception

John Donne (1572- 1631) was born into an unprivileged Catholic family in London in 1572, during an anti-Catholic period in England. Donne's father, who died 4 years later, was a prosperous merchant. His mother belonged to a celebrated Catholic family and was the daughter of poet and playwright John Heywood (Carey 1). Religion would play a significant role in Donne's life and thought. Donne's younger brother, Henry, was imprisoned in 1593 and subsequently died because he secretly harboured a catholic priest (Docherty 6). Donne went to both Oxford and Cambridge but was not given a degree due to his catholic roots. Donne spent most of his time and money as a young Londoner on books and travel. He started writing love lyrics early in his twenties.

Three things influenced Donne's life greatly and made him the man, the poet, and the preacher he was. Firstly, Donne was born into a catholic family at a time of severe persecution and oppression taking place against the Catholics. This persecution meant Catholics who refused to convert to Anglicanism were hunted down and even killed. Later in life, seeing and experiencing how Catholics were deprived of a normal life and even brutalised, Donne made the most difficult decision of his life, converting to Anglicanism. Donne had to endure this bitter decision and its spiritual consequences throughout his life. Carey cites three reasons (ambition, intellectuality, reactions to some "irrational" Catholic teachings) for Donne's religious "apostasy" and still admits that they had perpetual impacts upon Donne and his writings (Carey 17–21). John Donne was, secondly, affected by the several travels he had made to Europe. These travels necessarily meant Donne came in contact with several people from several backgrounds. But more importantly, they meant Donne would come face to face with other cultures, languages, and literatures. This first hand, unmediated experience must have enriched Donne's perspectives about the "others" the thing which is clearly evident and reflected in a handful of his poems. The third factor to have impacted Donne and his writing philosophy is the literary production movement of his time. The pull and push between the existing poets and critics and between Donne's attempts at change and experimentation, his poetic productions and the way he was received shaped his thoughts and worldview. This part of Donne's life and the way he reacted to his mainstream dominant narratives is the core of my thesis. As a matter of fact, several of Donne's poems reveal conscious interactions with and reactions to current literary rules and regulations. These very poems show a poet keen to transgress accepted poetic and social norms of the Elizabethan Age.

Donne's poetic endeavours were not praised by the mainstream critics of his time who looked down upon his poetry and sought to dismiss him from the realm of poetry altogether. Described as a metaphysical poet by Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), Donne was constantly negatively framed by his mainstream contemporaries and those who came after him. Admitting that they are "men of learning", Johnson labelled Donne and his followers as "a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets" (*The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*. 15) and hence the term "metaphysical" poet would be attached to Donne and his few followers even when later the term was described by T. S. Eliot as a label of abuse. The term "metaphysical" is such a strange term to be used

here especially that it is generally used to describe philosophy not poetry. But Johnson does not stop here. He further describes what Donne and his followers wrote as “verse” not “poetry” (*Samuel Johnson: Selected Writings* 397); in a word, a Donne poem might look like a poem but it is so lacking poetically that reading it reveals it has nothing to do with poetry. This opinion cannot, however, beat Ben Jonson’s early verdict against Donne. Jonson (1572- 1637), Donne’s contemporary, trespassed his role as a literary critic and called for the execution of Donne. Jonson’s extreme verdict that “Donne...deserved hanging” (Quoted in Donne, *John Donne: The Critical Heritage* 69) is reminiscent only of the hanging of Catholics who refused to convert to Anglicanism. This verdict, however, seems to be metaphorical, but we need to remember that in the field of poetry, the most important, and dangerous, tool is the metaphor itself. Jonson’s evidence that incriminates Donne lies in the fact that Donne misplaces the accents i.e. metres (Moloney 233). Furthermore, the first John Donne critic to use the term “metaphysics” was John Dryden (1631 -1700). Dryden said that

Donne affects the metaphysics, not only in his satires, but in his amorous verses, where nature only should reign; and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with the softnesses of love. (172)

It is not clear what Dryden exactly meant by “metaphysics” but the context tells he was accusing Donne of being too complicated for readers, especially females, to understand. Dryden’s how-to-do manual for writing poetry shows how critics of his time were didactically advocating certain rules of poetry writing. For a love poem, he suggests to Donne, the heart rather than the mind should be engaged in what he calls “the softnesses of love”. While this anti-Donne remark reveals a Neo-classical sexist attitude, it also tells of the place of women in their literature and how they were treated.

It seems obvious that there was no unanimous agreement between Donne’s early critics why they attacked him. For instance, Jonson cared about the metre and rhythm Donne was violating; whereas Dryden’s concern was thematic in regards to how a love poem must be and what a poet must do to entertain his female readers. And while Johnson’s disparaging remark was to banish Donne’s poems from the realm of poetry, Jonson’s implied intimidation by alluding to the hanging of the followers of the Catholic faith to which Donne and his family belonged is by far the most radical. However, all agreed that John Donne is not a serious poet whose writings are fundamentally flawed.

One has to wonder as to why, of all poets, Donne was probably the most negatively received by Neo-classical critics. What was not he doing right? Or more accurately what was Donne doing to English poetry that made the critics of his time feel threatened and in unison dismiss him and his poetry and make sure he is not read? The brief preview above gives a glimpse about Donne’s literary time. During Donne’s time, dominant Neo-classical teachings allowed only certain discourses; meanwhile, unfavourable discourses

were not allowed to exist, which might explain why a poet and a critic like Johnson would describe what Donne wrote as “verse” rather than poetry. The distinction here between “verse” and “poetry” seems to be of quality. At that time, only the patriarchal construct of poetry as a privileged practice with a highly embellished language, an elite subject matter, and systematic rules of rhyme and rhythm prevailed. And it was this type of “Johnsonian canons of taste,” to borrow Eliot’s term, resulting from “a narrow discipline [Johnson] was trained [in]” that would influence how readers received and appreciated Donne for generations to come (Eliot, *Selected Essays*. 279). Thus, Donne, although ignored, was present in the mentality and writings of his contemporary critics, but he was present for all the wrong reasons.

To assert his position as a poet of different forms that do not conform to the elitist idea of poetry, Donne, who seems to have been quite conscious of and well-informed about the literary production of his time, contested prevalent poetry writing techniques parodying and engaging with these then fashionable rules of decorum. His poetry is usually conscious about itself and its form (this type of poetry is sometimes termed “metapoetry”) and it repeatedly intertexts with and parodies other texts. Today, however, we read Donne’s poetry through the dominant modes of representation he has been subjected to. As shown above, these representations, which constructed Donne as the different other by those in power, are the results of a critical exercise of cultural power. Jonson, Dryden, and Johnson, among other critics, by the power of their position and words, make us see and experience Donne similar to the ‘Other’ in the sense used by Said in “Orientalism” – they portray him as alien, exotic, and amorous but never as a poet, let alone a serious one.

In this thesis, Donne is revisited in order to be examined in the light of Bakhtin’s theories, something that has not comprehensively been done before, because Bakhtinian concepts bring about novel perspectives to the study of Donne. Bakhtin enables us to see a variety of voices and worldviews or rather subtexts in Donne’s poetry and his constant attempts to break away with imposed rules of writing and even undermine and subvert the authorities of his time. Donne’s variety of usually dichotomic voices such as secular and religious, feminist and anti-feminist, and colloquial and sophisticated mirror Bakhtin’s concepts of parody, carnival, polyphony, and dialogism. I would argue that through Bakhtin’s dialogic thought we can manage to unpack the diverse and complex subtextual elements and techniques in Donne’s poetry which many of his contemporary mainstream critics overlooked, or considered unpoetic and unworthy. That, furthermore, will grant us a distinctive perspective on Donne’s poetry. The study, too, will utilise New Historical assumptions because any examination of Donne’s poetry will need a new historical look to re-examine Donne’s poetry, his contemporaries, and the relationships that existed between them. Thus, Donne, rather than being taken as a mere digression, needs to be put in the context of the eternal pull and push between the traditional and the experimental and the established and the emerging.

For instance, Donnean meta-fictional elements, or more accurately “meta-poetry” and parody, albeit humorous sometimes, should be read as a serious attempt to advance his position as an experimental poet and at the same time to bring about not only literary but also cultural transformation. The underlying assumption I am arguing for is that Donne’s poetry has important subtexts that can be better explored and unpacked using Bakhtin’s concepts. Some of these Donnean subtexts include liberating poetry and its norms from the confinement of the monologic Neo-classical worldview, for any idea that opposed this monologic view was “confined all the more harshly and implacably within its own boundaries,” (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 80). Reading Donne’s poetry, one feels that there is a story, sometimes a carnivalesque type of story, which Donne seemingly repeatedly narrated. And this story is very dialogic in nature which perhaps explains the dramatic elements that permeate Donne’s poetry. All in all, this reading unpacks Donne’s tendency to use “heterogeneous” ideas or images, or what I prefer to call the “grotesque poem” as a means to transgress the established norms and trouble their authority.

Bakhtin theories allow us to search for the critical response of the subclass to their literary, cultural, and aesthetic moment (Hashemi and Kazemian 253). For example, exploring the history of laughter, Bakhtin advances the notion of its liberating force, asserting that laughter resists hypocrisy, defeats fear, and degrades power (*Rabelais and His World* 47). Bakhtin argues, according to Aschkenasy, that carnival (carnavalesque) folk celebrations allowed for the humorous parody of authority and offered the oppressed voices relief from the rigidity of the system and an opportunity for expressing even rebellious views (“Ruth and Bakhtin’s Theory of Carnival” 1). The carnivalesque spirit, therefore, is a form of popular resistance which celebrates the grotesque elements of life and encourages the “crossing of boundaries”. For Aschkenasy, Bakhtin sees in this a social force that allowed a text to enter a socio-political discourse, and hence bring about cultural transformation (“Ruth and Bakhtin’s Theory of Carnival” 1). This is similar to reading Donne’s poetry. Reading Donne’s poetry, we are first amused by the whole situation of presenting traditionally accepted styles and themes so wittily. Upon careful considerations of Donne’s corpus, we start to see how authorities are mocked or mimicked, and then by time this emerging unofficial, unwanted narrative, which occasionally makes use of parody and humour, evolves to compete with or deconstruct the established official narratives and styles.

Therefore, Donne’s poetry should be read in the sense of dissatisfaction with the traditions that were supposed to be adopted by poets as the only way to compose poetry. How he expressed his frustration and reacted to his contemporaries is the subject matter of this thesis. Applying Bakhtin to Donne will enable us to understand how Donne attempted to recover, through multiplicity of voices, parody, satire, carnival and laughter, what was neutralized, to say the least, by the seriousness of the prevailing culture in the Age of Reason. Fanini puts this phenomenon tersely,

we see that life pervades art from the literary development of heteroglossia and art illuminates life as it recovers all its secular unofficial entirety of the popular culture of laughter and carnival, which has been neutralized by the culture of seriousness. (Fanini 34).

Equally, in Donne's poetry we find intertextuality, parody, satire, fluid poetic forms, novel imagery, and unfamiliar syntax typically considered unfit for poetry. These transgressive features have been neutralised by the mainstream critics.

In brief, the early reception of Donne stems from two related beliefs. First, the traditional thinking always placed the critic in a highly esteemed position, usually above texts and authors. And therefore, second, it is only natural that a critic assumes the position of speaking on behalf of the whole community, including both writers and readers. Since Neo-classical critics did not believe Donne was able to compose poetry, at least properly, they thought Donne failed to represent himself to readers. As a result, they took it upon themselves to represent Donne to readers and to shape their understanding of Donne. This, in my opinion, might explain Donne's critics' obsession with "readers". The hegemonic reading of the others' inability to represent themselves is at the heart of Neo-Classicalists' perception of the world and others, a monologic world in which they alone can versify.

It is worth mentioning here that John Donne was not totally rejected. He had a few readers and a dozen of followers (or imitators) such as George Herbert, Andrew Marvel, Henry Vaughan, and Richard Crashaw. Critics now believe that many of Donne's poems were "for and about women" (Bell, "Gender Matters: The Women in Donne's Poems" 214). Even some of his patrons were women (such as Lady Drury, the Countess of Bedford, and the Countess of Salisbury), which is a rare thing to see at that time. But it tells us that despite the negative framing Donne received, there were still some people who believed he was worthy of reading and following. Perhaps as the sub-class, these women saw in Donne a voice to speak for them and represent them amidst a dominant patriarchal worldview. Donne's treatment of women was commended by major feminist critics such as Woolf who praised the fact that the women in Donne's poetry are "as various and complex as Donne himself," (21).

1.1.3 Modern Interests in Donne

The twentieth century marked the heyday of experimentations in almost all fields of human life. Art and creative productions were no exceptions. Modernism in literature and mainly in poetry was marked by a trend towards resisting, even contesting, existing rules of versifying, which were seen as restraining emerging writings from creativity and individuality. At the turn of 20th century, modernist poets like Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and William Butler Yeats among many others spearheaded a movement that has in its essence refusing traditional modes of artistic writing. They advocated a break with rules and called for radical changes in poetic forms, subject matters, language, and imagery

(Albright 24; Corcoran 31). Those poetic forms were practiced as forms of liberation not only from traditionally accepted rules of verse but from conventional norms of the society, and most importantly were seen as significant tools of changing not merely literary sensibility but the whole society as well. The poet was seen as an intellectual and a significant initiator of change (Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" 40).

But these 20th century modernists did not come up with all these new styles and poetic tools. At least some of the revolutionary poetic practices they adopted were in practice in the past. T. S. Eliot asserts this belief as he says

Whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously. And I do not mean the impressionable period of adolescence, but the period of full maturity. (Eliot, *The Sacred Wood and Major Early Essays*. 27–28)

For Eliot, a poet should be aware that although art does not improve, its material is constantly in a process of change (*The Sacred Wood and Major Early Essays*. 29). The significance of this opinion lies in its invitation not to disregard old literature altogether because there had always been literature that can be of interest to poets and writers across time and place. For example, three hundred years before Eliot, Donne and some of his followers, now famously, though inadequately, known as the "Metaphysical Poets"¹ experimented on both the content and the form of poetry. The 20th century with its hike in seeking new, different ways of expressions had, in part, to go back in time to seek help in and uncover trends (Corcoran 32–33) trends that went either unnoticed or were marginalized not because they were not good, but because their time was not ripe i.e. because they were writing ahead of their time. The metaphysical poetry was a major source of modernism, therefore. T. S. Eliot's appraisal of Donne's poetry manifests the influence Donne had had on Eliot.

Again, Donne's conceptual daring and poetic experimentations on both form and content during the heyday of Neo-classicism rendered him erratically unpoetic, even eccentric. Poetry was Donne's field of undermining many poetic rules and several other societal and religious practices. Donne, for being different from his cultural and poetic milieu, was labelled "metaphysical" by the critics and poets of his time, a term of abuse (Eliot, *Selected Essays*. 241) that would negatively impact readers' reactions to and appreciation of Donne and other metaphysical poets for centuries to come. Despite the systematic framing and censorship against Donne, the way he approached poetry would

¹ While I believe and argue that the term "Metaphysical Poets/Poetry" has done more damage than good, it will be used as a term of convenience. Sometimes, however, I will be using Donne's school, group, or followers.

later contribute immeasurably to changing the rigid ways of how poetry would be composed.

It was Sir Herbert Grierson (1866-1960) who, first in his books “The Poems of John Donne” in 1912 and later the “Metaphysical Lyrics & Poems of the Seventeenth Century” in 1921, brought the attention of twentieth century poets and readers to the importance and brilliance of Donne and his handful of followers. Not only had Grierson published an anthology of their poems, but also wrote a review praising their ingenuity and rebutting some of the neo-classicists’ critical reviews raised against Donne. Grierson, for instance, praised Donne as “reflective”, “the most thoughtful and imaginative”, “genius” and “unconventional” (Quoted in Donne and Clements 112–22). Grierson’s general impression was that Donne composed poetry “of an extraordinarily arresting and haunting quality, passionate, thoughtful, and with a deep melody of its own” (lv). However, Grierson does not challenge the Neo-classical frames and critiques of Donne, nor does he try to explain this imperfection, ruggedness, and carelessness:

[Donne’s] poetry, [was] not perfect in form, rugged of line and careless in rhyme, a poetry in which intellect and feeling are seldom or never perfectly fused in a work that is of imagination all compact, yet a poetry. (Grierson lv)

Nonetheless, it is usually T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) who is credited with the resurrection of the John Donne school. Eliot commences his famous essay “The Metaphysical Poets” lamenting how the Metaphysicals were not taken as a model of poetry writing and described them as “a generation more often named than read, and more often read than profitably studied,” (Eliot, *Selected Essays*. 281), which summarises how critics treated Donne and his followers. Eliot as a result marks the beginning of a new era of the revival of the so-called Metaphysical poetry. Eliot’s interest in Donne arises from two main reasons: first, Eliot believed the complexity and variety of Donne’s poetry and that of other “metaphysical poets” such as Andrew Marvel reflect the age and how they “dislocate” language to serve their purposes. This call to break away from the inflexibility of imposed rules of language and rules of poetry writing was appealing to Eliot. He states

We can only say that it appears likely that poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be difficult. Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning. (Eliot, “Selected Prose of T. S.” 43)

Clearly, Eliot does not defend the accusation that Donne's poetry is difficult. In fact, he uses this claim to advance his belief in the complexity of poetry.

The second reason why Eliot appreciated the Metaphysical poets is a feature he believed characterised their poetry and made it different from previous and later verse—association of sensibility. The Neo-classicists of the 17th century suffered from a “dissociation of sensibility”, a phenomenon that “devoured” and rendered intellectual thought separate from the experience of feeling. Eliot comments

The poets of the seventeenth century, the successors of the dramatists of the sixteenth, possessed a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any kind of experience. They are simple, artificial, difficult, or fantastic, as their predecessors were; ...In the seventeenth century a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered; and this dissociation, as is natural, was aggravated by the influence of the two most powerful poets of the century, Milton and Dryden. (Eliot, *Selected Essays*. 247)

However, Eliot believed the metaphysical poetry was able to contain this phenomenon in what he termed an “association of sensibility” which combines both thought and feeling unlike the Neo-classicists who were mainly about thought, reason, and intellectualism. “A thought to Donne,” Eliot succinctly stresses, “was an experience; it modified his sensibility,” (Eliot, *Selected Essays*. 247). So, only Donne and later his followers managed, by uniting emotive experiences and thought, to free English poetry from the shackles of Neo-classical dissociation of sensibility that had dominated the literary scene.

Eliot's “association of sensibility” is perhaps a thought-provoking interpretation of what the Neo-classicists misinterpreted as “the most heterogeneous ideas ...yoked by violence together” (Johnson, *The Lives of the Poets*. Cowley. 94). That is, what was interpreted as irrelevant ideas illogically brought together in one poem was viewed by Eliot as a stroke of genius and the beginning of a real break with old rules of versification. In my viewpoint, by extension, this kind of variety, or “multiplied associations”, to use Eliot's term, is similar to what Bakhtin later promotes as heteroglossia, polyphony and carnivalesque, three features that brought most of the negative criticism and reception on Donne and his followers. In a word, what Neo-classicists disliked and denounced about Donne's new poetry was hailed by modernist poets and critics like Eliot and is better explained using Bakhtin's proposed dialogic concepts.

That said, this thesis is set to investigate John Donne's poetry to trace and disentangle his poetic experimentations. The thesis is based on the assumption that Donne was not an irrelevant digression, as seen by some Neo-classicists of his time, but rather a significant addition to the movement of English literary production. It seems, to me, that

classifying Donne as a “classicist” nowadays is unfair and ironic, unfair because he was writing against the conventions of that time, and ironic because those same Neo-classicists did not even consider him a poet, let alone one of them. Donne strongly believed in what was later voiced by William Blake, “I must create a system or be enslaved by another man’s / I will not reason or compare: my business is to create,” (Burdett 111). And creating, rather than imitating, was John Donne’s business.

While Donne remains one of the most important authors who were brought back to life thanks to the modernist movements that decided to reread and question the English canon, his reception usually tends to focus on his wit, themes, and theology and thus remains lacking. The brief readings above exhibit two contrasting receptions of Donne depending on where the viewers position themselves or their writings rather than what Donne was really doing. Classicists viewed him as a recklessly flawed poet and perhaps a threat to their dominance because they wanted to monopolise the literary scene (Omar) while the modernists viewed him as a poet who dared to question existing poetic norms. And in between these two receptions, Donne remains inefficiently researched and unfavourably read and studied and will usually be branded the most controversial of all poets (Grady i).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

T. S. Eliot described the metaphysical poets as “a generation more often named than read, and more often read than profitably studied” (Eliot, *Selected Essays*. 241). And roughly a hundred years later, Eliot’s statement is still valid. Unfortunately, although many scholars nowadays consider Donne and his group a daring attempt that witnessed the introduction of new poetic forms to English literature, Donne’s poetry is still not examined from a more comprehensive perspective i.e. that is a movement or a school of poetry that was the first serious attempt towards disrupting hegemonic norms of versification and thus liberating and modernising English poetry. In addition, Donne along with his followers is still largely received strikingly similar to the way he was framed four hundred years ago, which hinders a serious exploration of his poetry. In order to avoid doing so, negative frames surrounding Donne should be traced and unravelled and his styles of poetry writing and poetic techniques ought to be investigated and analysed.

Many of the 20th and 21st centuries Donne studies seem to focus primarily on Donne’s devotional poetry, his thematic experiences in regard to the soul, women, and God, and his metaphors and imagery. While a study of these elements is crucial to understand Donne’s experimentations, studying them in isolation or disregarding Donne’s attempts to disturb and transgress existing structural constructs of poetry norms and styles would render these studies incomprehensive. For many of these critics or researchers, the door to the study of Donne’s early and modern reception then and now seems, unfortunately, to have been closed. But the matter of fact is that the revival of Donne’s poetic heritage at the hands of the likes of T. S. Eliot does not suffice. A comprehensive understanding of this crucial literary phenomenon in which mainstream critics unanimously drive away

an emerging writer because he or she happens to write differently is crucial to understand especially today in the digital age, in which young people's creativity and revolutionary productions are usually shunned and dismissed as immature or inappropriate.

As a result of Donne's revolutionary ideas as well as the peculiar way he approached certain issues of his time such as women and God, Donne was not well-received among many of his contemporary rivals and for two centuries to come. Instead, he was subjected to a systematic process of framing that left him and his followers unfavourable to the general literary taste of the age, something that still lingers today. That meant Donne early in his life was sentenced to reside, and later be buried, outside the English canonical traditions. The argument I raise here is that the reason why Donne's poetry fell out of the canonical fashion was largely due to the negative frames unfairly forced upon him (and upon readers) by the critics of his time and not because his poetry was a failure as Johnson suggested. Even nowadays, Donne is still largely introduced to readers and students through the same lenses and discourse that reduced him to being "complex", "perplexing", "vulgar", and overly "amorous".

The poetic techniques such as satire, parody and sarcasm, his very unorthodox modes of expression and versification, his witty argumentative style, colloquial language and unconventionally unfamiliar metaphors and subject matters, and untraditional poetic forms further worsened Donne's reception. These very features, however, if read through Bakhtinian perspectives, guarantee a fresher look at Donne's poetry. Bakhtin would read Donne's "vulgar" language and unconventional structures, for example, as carnivalesque release of frustration and as an expression of a revolutionary spirit against the institutions of power. Furthermore, Donne's "heterogeneous ideas" would be seen as polyphonic voices which distinguish Donne's poetry and make it more open to a diversity of voices. But so far, no comprehensive study has attempted to utilise Bakhtin's dialogic theories to approach Donne's poetry. Therefore, a significant gap still exists in the research literature on Donne from a Bakhtinian perspective.

Donne's poetry stands out among the poetry written in his life time. It is different in both form and content. But perhaps more importantly is that his poetic sensibility was totally different from the one prevalent at his time. In form, Donne experimented on the metre, rhyme, and shape of the poem as a whole. Even the sonnet, the most rigid form of all poetry, was not immune to Donne's experimentations. A Donnean sonnet has a different theme: religion, god, and faith, and a different rhyme scheme: ABBAABBACDCDEE. Donne's use of colloquial language also stands out as strikingly different at a time when the language of poetry had to be highly embellished. Imagery-wise, Donne deviated from the imagery types of his time. And for some, it is Donne's conceit that is the core poetic tool that makes Donne's poetry different because the nature of the conceit affects the whole poem. But not all his poems have conceits.

Unfortunately, there is still a strong trend that reads these Donnean features as Donne toying with poetry to serve his theology (Rumens) indicating that these are signs of weakness Donne could not escape because he was not a real poet but an amateur one. Now studying any of these issues in isolation takes place at the expense of benefiting from the totality of Donne's poetic and critical contributions that indeed changed and enriched the course of English poetry. In this thesis, I am proposing a broader approach to the study of Donne's poetry, an approach that brings Bakhtin and New Historicism to revisit Donne and re-position his poetic experimentations as pioneering modernist attempts where Donne is disrupting the rigidity of poetry rules. Having done that, Donne attempts to topple down the mainstream rules of poetry and trouble their patriarchal worldview.

Today Donne is often introduced to young readers and enthusiasts as a man of theology and wit. This framing seems to be an extension to the early negative reception of Donne's poetic productions. For instance, *The Guardian*, one of the most widely read online newspapers, presents Donne as a theologian who only "played" with poetic forms rather than a poet with religious themes and concerns. The author, Roz Kaveney, insists on this reductive reading of Donne; "For Donne, it was the theology that mattered most," (Kaveney). Although she admits Donne deliberately breaks the music sometimes to serve a purpose, Kaveney believes that these purposes are purely about religion and faith. She concludes, "Donne will play games with broken structure, to make a serious point; he will pile up metaphors to talk to us of how faith, how conversion to faith or some other conviction, is a breaking," (Kaveney). Even Donne's first modern critic, Herbert Grierson, complained that early critics identified Donne as a wit more than anything else and that with later critics Donne's wit "still bulks largely", (Grierson vii–viii). In his "John Donne: The Critical Heritage", Albert Smith states that that many of Donne's early tributes neither referred to his poetry nor praised it:

Both the number and the quality of the tributes to Donne assembled in the volume indicate that the publication was no ordinary event; though rather few of his elegists actually mention his poetry, let alone praise particular poems, and only one of them presents him as something other than a great divine who expressed his piety in verse. (Donne, *John Donne: The Critical Heritage* 11)

As much as the study of Donne's intellect and religious devotion is beneficial, the extra emphasis critics readily put on these issues means that we may not be able to appreciate Donne's poetic creation as should be. Thus, it is at the core of this study to question and examine the early and modern frames upon Donne, his poetry, and his readers.

The main research concern is that Donne as an emerging writer was persistently marginalised and/or suppressed by mainstream institutional writers and critics of his time. Those institutional critics, described as elitists by Bloom (*The Western Canon* 16), usually believed in a set of norms that writers had to comply with. Any early poet who

did not abide by the rules of versification was consigned to oblivion, therefore. Although Donne was marginalised for a while, he managed to resurface every now and then until he was finally established as an important name in English poetry by Grierson and by Eliot, as shown above. However, studying Donne or even his followers in isolation, which has been the norm, does not do justice to Donne or his school. Accordingly, critical tools suggested by Mikhail Bakhtin will be applied on Donne's poetry to examine the series of overlapping codes and discourses that distinguished his poetry and made him survive the deliberate attempts to kick him out of the canon. I would argue that, contrary to the poetry of his contemporaries, Donne's poetry called upon readers to think about it in terms of many voices, i.e. in terms of what Bakhtin calls heteroglossia/dialogism or of what he and Kristeva refer to as polyphony or intertextuality, respectively. The variety and diversity of Donne's poetic forms, discourses, images, and the mixture of subject matters bring to mind Bakhtin's carnivalesque literature, which, historically, was a practice used by marginalized voices to trouble the authority. In a word, Donne's contesting of the canonical order and rules of versification was targeting the limitation the imposition of classical rules dictate to the creativity of art and literature.

Finally, despite the importance of applying Bakhtin to literature that has been marginalised, until now no thorough attempts have been made to make use of his theories to study Donne. Bakhtin's theories are crucial to the study of emerging writers always suppressed and intimidated and always struggling to find innovative literary techniques to fight back. If done properly, a study of Donne in the light of Bakhtin could yield beneficial results in the field of Donnean and Bakhtinian studies. That will also shed new lights on Donne, and by extension on his followers, and even on young emerging writers who might want to seek guidance from a theoretician like Bakhtin and a poet like Donne, both of whom had the contestation of mainstream thought at the heart of their works. Even today in the age of technological and social media advancement and personalised digital productions, we still have to experience censorship and marginalisation similar to that which prevailed in Bakhtin's Russia and long before in Donne's England. Benefitting young emerging writers by studying Donne and Bakhtin is a real outcome of my thesis. In a nutshell, due to the lack of Bakhtinian studies on Donne, his poetic contributions, and attempts to subvert established poetry modes there is a need to study Donne in the light of Bakhtin's dialogic theories in order to unpack Donne's reception and poetic techniques.

1.3 Research Objectives

This thesis is an attempt at a detailed exploration of Donne's selected poetry and a proper re-evaluation of his early and modern reception. The objectives are 1) to unframe, using New Historical assumptions, Donne's early and modern reception in order to shift the boundaries of reading Donne and position him in the wider, more universal context of innovative artistic thinking; 2) to investigate, using Bakhtin's concepts of parody and intertextuality, Donne's interactions with the poets, critics, and literary movement and the culture of power of his time and how that influences our understanding of Donne's poetic contributions now; 3) to explore Donne's attempts to bring poetry to the masses

and end elitist monopoly over poetry; this includes using the overdue Bakhtin's theory of Carnival to examine Donne's discursive techniques to liberate poetry and subvert the established mainstream poetic techniques and styles of his time; and finally 4) to hear the many diverse voices and dialogues in the poetry of Donne and to recognise the voices of the sub-class embedded in his poetry as a tool of resistance to imposed worldview of the establishment.

1.4 Scope and limitations of the Study

The thesis will study thirty selected poems by John Donne to examine the contributions he offered to English poetry. Although Donne, the instigator of Metaphysical Poetry, was later followed by a few poets, I will be focussing only on Donne as the most representative of this type of poetry and as an illuminating example of and a case study for emerging writers and how they are usually subjected to canonical writers' negative framing. In addition, the research will examine only four major critics/poets of the Age of Reason who reacted negatively to Donne's poetry. They are Ben Jonson, John Dryden, Samuel Johnson, and Alexander Pope. The primary concern here is to bring more modern interest in metaphysical poetry represented by Donne. Thus, a re-evaluation of Grierson's, Eliot's, and Virginia Woolf's praise of John Donne's poetry is essential. To do so, both New Historical and Bakhtinian tools are recruited. My thesis does not attempt to find a final word on either Donne or Bakhtin; attempting to do so is the very antithesis of what these two giants aspired for: openness and dialogue.

1.5 Justification of Selected Poems

Chronologically, John Donne's poetry is usually divided into early and late poetry. His early poetry includes mainly love lyrics, verse letters to friends, and commissioned poems. However, some critics tend to classify his poetry thematically into five groups: songs and sonnets, elegies, satires, verse letters, divine poems. These five categories represent the gradual and temporal Donne's evolution, from sensual poems and verse letters to religious devotional poems. The thirty Donnean poems selected in my thesis, therefore, aim at unravelling Donne's experimental poetic techniques and his poetry reactions to the rise of Neo-classicism. I have selected poems from Donne's two major phases: late and early, but also to cover all the thematic categories above, I made sure to include texts from across Donne's thematic spectrum. The concern is to trace and examine Donne's attitudes towards poetry of his time as a young promising poet and later as a mature poet and a preacher. The aim is to cover as much of Donne's poetry production as possible and trace whether, while he developed poetically and intellectually, Donne's critical attitude towards existing rules of versification during his time remained the same. The poems discussed in this thesis are usually used in their modernised English.

1.6 Methodology

This research attempts to comprehend the interrelated relationships between John Donne and his contemporaries in addition to a modern reading of the poetic tools Donne applied in order to survive amidst an avalanche of outspoken critics. My thesis claims that Donne was aware of the literary movement of his time and the negative reception he received and that made him early in his life react in his own way to these attempts to silence him. Donne writing back meant he wrote to subvert the mainstream poetry trends of his time which meant the official critics' reactions were not at all favourable. To explore that interaction and Donne's experimental poetic techniques, I will employ tools from two theories: New Historicism and Bakhtin's Dialogic theories. A New Historical reading will function as an umbrella frame to question Donne's reception by examining his poetry with references to the historical background and what his contemporaries said about him in order to reflect as accurately as possible the proper relationship between Donne's poetry and its historical context.

Besides, a Bakhtinian reading of Donne's poetry will unpack his poetic techniques and unravel his new literary techniques of contesting well-established rules of decorum of his time. That said, Donne's selected texts will be analysed in fine detail when necessary. Examining "nothing but the bare words ... on the page" (Richards 14) will help me explore the specifics of the poem and how they help construct the general assumptions. In other words, using the close reading tools of style, language, sound, imagery, and form, the selected poems will construct informed responses and create balance between these objective tools and the more subjective nature of New Historical ones. Where necessary, a comparative analysis between Donne's poems and those of his contemporaries will be attempted to highlight where they meet, if any, where they depart, and what implications that might have on Donne's poetic intentions. Using the Bakhtinian tools of Intertextuality, Carnival, Polyphony, and Dialogism as the conceptual framework, this thesis will yield a unique understanding of the roles Donne and his poetry played in the development of English literature in general and poetry in particular, and perhaps more importantly, shifting the emphasis from mimesis to inventiveness and conceptual daring. Exploring these Bakhtinian conceptions will enable me to trace Donne's subversive poetry and the techniques he used to rip off the "façade of perfection" constructed to control the society and its artistic expressions (R. Williams 412).

1.7 Significance of the Study

Through Bakhtin's theories, the study attempts a fresh look at John Donne's poetry. Rather than discussing Donne as a digression, or examining certain Donnean issues, tools, or features in isolation, the thesis aims at placing him at a very crucial conjunction in the history of English literature production. In my study, I will not only attempt to unframe, contextualise, and place Donne in the wider context of the pull and push between the old and the modern, the mainstream and the marginal, but also endeavour to examine and discuss the universal fight over power and narrative that took place during his time. Because master narratives of his time deterred and marginalised Donne,

by applying Bakhtin's theory, I aim to show how Donne was trying to subvert the centre of power at his time. The modern interest in uncovering the voice of the marginalised by deconstructing readings given by the exclusive point of view of the elite class also makes this research of special contemporary significance. Furthermore, exploring Donne using Bakhtin's concepts will enable me to explore never-before examined aspects and voices of John Donne's poetry. Because

Bakhtin's theory, which dates the rise of the carnivalesque to medieval culture yet recognises its roots in ancient nature festivities, encompasses several of these approaches while at the same time helps to identify a voice hitherto unrecognized in the text: that of the comic. (Aschkenasy, "Reading Ruth through a Bakhtinian Lens: The Carnivalesque in a Biblical Tale" 439)

These voices of Donne's poetry that most often go unnoticed and unheard are thus brought from the margin to the front and centre. That said, this research showcases Donne's poetic experimentations, such as the carnivalesque element, the multi-voicedness, and the parody all in an anti-establishment context. Thus, this thesis serves to empower the marginalised poets, showcase their voices, and trouble the societal norms in the hope of dismantling a whole paradigm of artistic repression.

Further, my thesis shows Donne as a predecessor and a role model for the kind of literary resistance to be adopted in order for emerging writers to have voices of their own and not those imposed upon them. No comprehensive study of Bakhtin and Donne has been attempted; therefore, taking Donne's metaphysical poetry as a case study will cover a significant gap that exists in the literature written about Donne from a Bakhtinian perspective. It will also widen our scope of studying and restudying poets and writers who were ignored, and in Donne's case framed and repelled, only because the mainstream writers/critics of their time neither appreciated nor accepted them. The study offers many new insights to scholars and emerging experimental writers of the twenty-first century as well as intellectual historians. The research will finally contribute positively to constructing a clearer vision of how John Donne became John Donne and what it takes to bring about paradigm shift in regards to poetry and society.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

Donne's experimental poetry will be more appreciated when the negative frames, imposed on him and his poetry by his contemporaries, are laid bare. The negative reception, some of which still lingers until this day, of Donne was largely due to how he was framed: perplexing and complex. To some, however, Donne's poetry can be seen as exactly what classical poetry was not, in aspects of form, structure, diction, imagery, theme, and metaphor. Both popular opinions are extreme. My study examines both opinions and sees where Donne's poetry fits. Hence, this might give us the chance to read his poetry, to use Harold Bloom's term, as "a corrective movement" (*The Anxiety*

of Influence: A Theory of Poetry 14) that does not violently replace older modes and styles but communicates with them. To do that, the thesis will adopt New Historicism and Bakhtinian approaches.

1.8.1 New Historicism

New historicists, as opposed to traditional historicists, assume that literary texts are bound up with other discourses and that they form part of a history that continues to be in the making, i.e. still being written and naturally interpreted and re-interpreted. New Historicism pays greater attention to the historical and cultural circumstances in which literary texts are composed. Instead of treating texts as isolated works, New Historicism takes into account social conflicts as well as aspects of political philosophy, religious beliefs, and other ideas that audiences then were, to say the least, aware of. Therefore, new historical critics refuse the polarity between the text/literature and the world/history because the very question might indicate that they are two separate things. A second tenet of New Historicism relies on the fact that history is not a set of objective facts. What new historical critics are doing is more of contesting assumptions of objective interpretation of history. “[N]ew historicism views historical accounts as narratives, as stories, that are inevitably biased according to the point of view, conscious or unconscious, of those who write them,” (Tyson 286). And, third, new historicists consider literary production a cultural act like carpentry, warfare, and printing only different in its peculiar modes (Bennett and Royle 119), for, according to Stephen Greenblatt, the founding father of New Historicism, “art does not simply exist in all cultures; it is made up along with other products, practices, [and] discourses of a given culture,” (Greenblatt 13). Greenblatt sums up the whole ideology of New Historicism: “methodological self-consciousness is one of the distinguishing marks of the new historicism in cultural studies as opposed to a historicism based upon faith in transparency of signs and interpretative procedures,” (158). Consequently, literature, which is an integral part of the social milieu, cannot be separated from its cultural and historical context. No matter what the circumstances about a given literary text or its historical surroundings are, new historicists believe, a text continues to be reconsidered and even transformed because history, being textual and narrative, is subject to rewriting and transformation. The textual nature of history is in fact a Derridean concept (Derrida lxxxix).

Greenblatt believes that any artistic production is inevitably negotiated between one creator or a group of creators and the practices and institutions of the society (158). As a result, to grasp a particular literary work, Greenblatt suggests, critics should work on what he calls “the margins of the text” by examining documents such as legal papers, letters, accounts of travel which will enable them to gain further insight into what he terms as “the half-hidden cultural transactions,” (4). The assumption I raise in this thesis is that critiques of Donne were not innocent or mere literary opinions. Read in the context of the Elizabethan treatment of Catholics, for instance, comments made by Jonson should be interpreted as serious threats that hurt not only Donne’s poetry but Donne himself. As pointed earlier, Jonson’s remarks that Donne deserved “hanging” and that

he would “perish” are two implied death threats targeting someone with Catholic roots at a time when some Catholics were hanged and perished at the stake for their faith.

In my thesis, New Historicism serves as a philosophical background to the Bakhtinian concept I am applying to Donne’s poetry. New Historical assumptions that require we question the existing models of power and culture and the agenda of mainstream producers and makers of both culture and history. Hence, New Historicism tools allows me to examine several of Donne’s texts and critiques in their historical and cultural contexts before analysing their poetic techniques in the light of Bakhtin’s dialogic theory.

1.8.2 Bakhtin’s Dialogic Theory

Although the conceptual framework will make use of Greenblatt’s new historical assumptions, it is Bakhtin’s theories that constitute the core of the research framework. Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) is a Russian literary critic and theorist, among many other things. Reading Donne within the framework of the Bakhtinian dialogic concepts of Parody/Heteroglossia, Polyphony, and Carnival will help illuminate the subversive elements in his poetry and highlight the semantic and semiotic codes of cultural interaction between the authority and the marginalised—Bakhtin’s thought shows how fundamental that was to Donne’s work. In order to examine Bakhtin’s major critical concepts mentioned above, we need to understand Bakhtin’s theory of Dialogism and examine it as an umbrella term for Bakhtin that includes almost all of his other concepts within those I use in my thesis, namely Parody, Polyphony, and Carnival. The tools provided by Bakhtin’s dialogic theory can be a very important framework in the study of Donne’s poetry in the context of its cultural and social atmospheres. Parker-Fuller believes that Bakhtin’s dialogic theory provides the best analytical tools that address the socio-cultural aspects of literary performance:

The writings of Mikhail Bakhtin offer a useful framework for the study of individual texts and their potentials for performance while at the same time acknowledging the social, cultural, and political nature of all texts, and the primacy of context to textual meaning. Indeed, his dialogic theory, based on a perception of the inherent relationship between ideology and utterance, addresses the sociopolitical fact of literary performance and provides analytical tools relevant to the act of performing literature. (Park-Fuller)

Like New Historicism, Bakhtin’s dialogic theories stem primarily from the inevitable influence ideology (context) has on utterance (text). In my thesis, I examine how Donne’s poetry invites a dialogic reading on three major levels: 1) Donne’s parody and intertextuality create free and familiar contact with previous texts and future potential readers and demonstrate Bakhtin’s perception of literature as a dynamic rather than fixed process. 2) Donne’s “heterogeneous” ideas, forms, and jargons, engender dialogue

between two or more opposing worldviews regarding poetry writing: the mainstream and the experimental and the serious, official worldview and the carnivalesque festivities, bringing into question the established aesthetics of poetry of his time. 3) the multiplicity of voices in Donne's poetry and how it showcases the sub-class and exemplifies Bakhtin's concepts of Polyphony and Dialogism.

1.8.2.1 Parody and Intertextuality

For Bakhtin, parody transcends its conventional definition of merely mocking mainstream texts and generating laughter. Parody, instead, opens the gates of experimentations and inventiveness by questioning the established norms of writings thought to be too sacred and fixed to change. No matter what parody does, at the end of the day it necessitates a dialogue between the so-called high and low literature. Bakhtin defines parody as the "creation of a decrowning double; it is that same world 'turned inside out'" (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 127). That means parody, for Bakhtin, is a serious artistic reproduction that plays a major role in criticizing predominant social and literary norms. In this regard, "decrowning" is vital since parody tries to deconstruct the styles being parodied. The comic element, it seems, is only marginal to Bakhtin's concept of parody. While Bakhtin does not at all negate laughter as an element of parody, it is parody's ability to decrown existing authorities rather than the comedy that might ensue that concerns him more. In a word, laughter is only part of parody not all of it. As a result, the alternative artistic styles parody offers means it is a powerful force of freedom because it "relativises" the purported 'sacred word' against other less popular voices (Morris 16). In other words, parody pushes canonical texts into the background and peripheral voices are pushed to the centre. A conventionally monologic world, one with a dominant voice and style, is hence resisted through parody which introduces readers to and opens up more possibilities and more voices, i.e. polyphonic world.

The parodies Bakhtin examines are serious. They do not aim at provoking laughter as much as they aim at providing readers with alternatives that can be seen as better and more profound than the original texts. A reader, exposed to the singularity of meaning in a society dominated by a single monologic discourse, coming face to face with other possible and viable representations of reality is what parody seeks. This will enable readers to raise questions and inevitably lead to transformation and change. The dialogic fact of Bakhtin's parody is an essential tool of understanding relations between different worldviews and styles coming together in one text, which makes a text that parodies a lot richer in its multiplicity of meaning than the original text that assumes a singular and finalised worldview. Bakhtinian understanding that parodies are equal to if not richer than the original texts is crucial to the understanding of Donne's parodic poems. In addition to parody that permeates Donne's poetry, we can also use Bakhtin's intertextuality and other metafictional elements (self-parody of meta-poetry) in Donne's poetry to examine how Donne interacted with his predecessors and contemporaries.

1.8.2.2 Carnival and the Grotesque

As a literary concept, the Carnival was developed by Bakhtin first in his “Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics” and later in “Rabelais and His World”. The carnival is traced back to medieval festivals in which the sacred and the profane had been brought together by humour and grotesque. People engaged in the carnivals made the ultimate use of the freedom given to them during these times to voice, and act, their displeasures, to say the least, with the ruling bodies, namely the monarchy and the church that dominated and dictated social and cultural norms. Slowly but steadily these celebratory practices transposed into literature. A carnivalesque literary text, thus, endeavours to subvert and liberate the assumed dominating literary styles through chaos and humour. To Bakhtin, this is the kind of literature that gives the socio-ideological dialogue an “extrapersonal social force” (Holquist 36).

Through carnivalesque grotesque literature, a world upside-down is created, facts and worldviews taken for granted are ceaselessly contested, which imposes an equal dialogic status. The alternative voices within the carnivalised literary text de-privilege the authoritative voice of the hegemony as they mingle high culture with the profane. In short, all rules of decorum from the elite subject matter to the standardised form and highly embellished poetic diction are violated and questioned. Above all, the classical notion of not mixing genres in an attempt to present pure forms of expression is threatened. It is within such literary forms, Bakhtin believes, that we find resistance to authority and the place where cultural, and potentially social and political change can take place. Therefore, literary texts that are carnivalistic or grotesque in nature or those that present a carnival sense of the world engage in this act of resistance. At a time of considerable emphasis placed on decorum, stylistic unity, and poetic etiquette, Donne’s poetry seems saturated with what Bakhtin calls “a carnival sense of the world” (*Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* 107). The carnival sense that permeates Donne’s world determines both its features and its relation to existing reality. The result is that this sense weakens and mocks the established worldview of Donne’s time and shakes its stiff rationality of discourse and worldview and its singular meaning which is at the heart of the literary production movement of the Renaissance.

Applying the Bakhtinian concepts of carnival and grotesque to Donne showcases illustrations in which prevailing structures are sometimes mimicked and mocked to bring about poetic transformation along with social and cultural reform especially regarding the status of God, women, and emerging voices. My argument here is that a considerable amount of Donne’s poetry is carnivalesque in nature in two ways: first, its language of heteroglossia and polyphony gives voice to opposing views across a wide spectrum of register, from high to low, from elegant and euphemistic to blunt, and from the devotional to the sensual. Second, the spirit of mockery, satire, and mixtures of genres and forms underlies Donne’s poetry. Still, the element of carnival adds a sense of chaos to a world that was thought to be so structured and so organic that many critics and poets then thought there was no need, also no room, for more experimentation.

1.8.2.3 Polyphony and Dialogism

When texts entail a host of overlapping discourses or voices, they have what Bakhtin calls Heteroglossia. These voices place the text in relation to the world even if it is read as pure fiction. The many voices such texts have are called polyphony. The significance of heteroglossia lies in three main things: first, it offers several competing voices without making a particular voice standard. Second, it contests monologic speeches that dictate the silence of other voices. Third, and last, it “fragments ideological thought into multiple views of the world,” (Morris 15). In a word, the multiplicity of voices in this regard opens to interpretations what has been considered certain and authoritative, something also New Historicism advocates.

If a literary work is dialogic, it means it contains elements of dialogue both with other literary works and with other writers. This dialogue, according to Morris, can be coercive and threatening; if all the texts are taken into consideration, it seems unfair to claim there is no awareness of the play of power in dialogic relations even though this is not always foregrounded (Morris 9). The recurrence of these two phenomena, Heteroglossia and Dialogism, poses a threat to existing norms of power since they propose a different worldview that is constantly being submerged by mainstream trends:

Heteroglossia is certainly perceived as the constituting condition for the possibility of independent consciousness in that any attempt to impose one unitary monologic discourse as the ‘Truth’ is relativized by its dialogic contact with another social discourse, another view of the world. (Morris 73)

Heteroglossia and dialogism are, accordingly, interdependent in the sense that they complement each other but should not be used interchangeably.

As for Polyphony, it is the concept that deals with the many voices, usually contradictory and various, in one text. This feature, according to Bakhtin, makes texts modernist because rather than muting and repressing dissent or speaking for the underprivileged, it gives them the chance to speak up for themselves, as opposed to texts where the authoritarian voice of the author dominates and prevails. Foregrounding the polyphonic meaning of Donne’s peculiar language and sometimes comic subject matters or extended metaphors, informal situations go against the traditional ways of versification, which had emphasized the seriousness of poetic forms, subject matter, and diction. From a Bakhtinian perspective, the public nature of the narrative in Donne, seen in the several appearances of the community and its voices, makes this narrative a site where the Bakhtinian dialogue is possible. A Bakhtinian reading uncovers the polyphonic sounds heard in the texts—the dialogic being among the loudest—which counterpoint Donne’s contemporaries’ “monologic utterance”. It also points to the interaction between Donne’s literary and cultural dimensions and offers explanations for several, if not all, of what Neo-classicists saw as perplexing and heterogeneous in his poetry, which is something

that has not been sufficiently researched. In Donne's poetry, the dialogic element can be read as the subtle strategy of undermining established authorities of versification.

Furthermore, Bakhtin's idea of dialogism, valued by feminist dialogics, offers "a way of recognizing competing voices without making any single voice normative, [and] resisting and subverting the monologic speech that produces silence" (Bauer and McKinstry 6). For the first time, the margin comes to the centre of interest face to face with the established dominant voices:

A carnivalesque reading also buttresses a feminist interpretation of the story because it juxtaposes the established cultural hegemony with the social and religious margin and restores a dialogic relationship between them. It gives voice to the subclass. (Aschkenasy, "Reading Ruth through a Bakhtinian Lens: The Carnivalesque in a Biblical Tale" 438)

Not only women's voices, but also certain established voices like that of God are also carnivalised, multiplied, and made diverse. At the essence of dialogic literature is to give voice to the voiceless. And giving voice to the voiceless appears to be an essential part of Donne's poetic endeavours. In Donne, the woman seemingly has voices different from the prevalent unitary portrayal during his life time. And God has voices different in a way or another from the ones propagated then.

By engaging these quintessentially anti-establishment practices, which we now, thanks to Bakhtin, term as dialogism, parody, carnival, and polyphony, Donne was turning this Renaissance standpoint of monologic singularity with its unitary discourse upside down and inside out. Both New Historicism and Bakhtinian theories share common ground that makes using them together in this research worthwhile and enriching. They both share similar points of departure, both believe meaning is not fixed—that meaning changes in time and space, and that it is always in the making. Similarly, both theories focus on what marginalised by mainstream criticism by bringing to the centre what has been pushed to the margins. New Historicism and Bakhtin seek to uncover the subtexts of literary works in an attempt to point out the constant attempts and techniques marginalised or oppressed people and writers use in order to resist forms of ideological rigidity. In brief, my thesis takes the core concepts from Bakhtin but and while before embarking on that, it will utilise New Historical tools to unframe Donne's reception.

1.9 Organisation of Thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter One introduces the topic, its conceptual framework, research problem and research objectives. Chapter One sets the ground for the rest of the chapters by foregrounding the conceptual framework for more elaboration in Chapter Two and the analyses chapters. Chapter Two is the Literature Review which

is divided into two major parts: a review of Donne's reception then and now. Major Donne critiques of prominent critics are brought into question and analysed in the light of certain New Historical tools in which the margins of the texts help deconstruct Donne's critiques. It further contains a review of Bakhtin's theories to construct a proper framework for the current thesis to examine Donne's poetry in the light of Bakhtin's concepts: parody, carnival, and polyphony. Chapter Two will also examine previous studies on Bakhtin and poetry and Donne and Bakhtin's theories. Then there are three analyses chapters. Chapter Three commences with a crucial discussion of Donne's Intertextuality to explore Donne's awareness of his poetic production. Then the chapter takes on parody in order to establish Donne as a parodist. Doing so is significant to the study of Donne as it places him in relations to others who preceded him and those who followed him. Chapter Four examines Donne's poetry in the light of Bakhtin's concepts of the carnival and grotesque. In brief, it examines Donne's selected poems as carnivals that include all people, all voices, and all available discourses and worldviews. This chapter explores the reasons behind Donne's use of carnivalesque techniques in his poetry. Chapter Five seeks to identify the multiple voices in Donne's poetry. Further, this chapter studies the voices of the sub-class undermined by the established canonical writings but given a platform in Donne's poetry where they speak up and enjoy freedom. The concepts used here are Bakhtin's polyphony and dialogism. Chapter Six wraps up the thesis, sums up the contributions, and suggests further studies.

1.10 Definitions of Terms

Because Bakhtin has his own jargon, I believe it would be appropriate to list some of the terms that will frequently recur in this research. The definitions are quiet largely based on Graham Roberts's glossary which he supplemented to Morris's "The Bakhtin Reader" (Morris 245–252). The terms are arranged alphabetically.

1.10.1 Addressivity and Answerability

Bakhtin believes that any utterance is always addressed to someone, expecting, and sometimes provoking, and generating responses and answers i.e. the presence of Addressivity anticipates, and in fact is contingent on, Answerability. Accordingly, this discourse is democratic and is essentially dialogic and is inseparable from its community. Every utterance therefore is governed by another different context; "Discourse lives, as it were, on the boundary between its own context and another, alien, context," (Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* 284).

1.10.2 Carnival

To Bakhtin, Carnival is a social and cultural institution that he traces back to the medieval era. Humour and popular events used in a Carnival foster a celebratory perception of the society and construct a second life of the people outside of the seriousness of officialdom. The Carnival grotesque is the concept in which bodily, sometimes, lowly, acts of eating, digestion, sex, and defecation challenge the authority.

1.10.3 Dialogism and Dialogue

If a literary work is dialogic, it means it contains elements of dialogue with other literary works, other writers, and other social norms and practices. Dialogue, the basic trope in Bakhtin's thought, is a lot broader than its general meaning as there is no existence, meaning, word, or thought that does not enter into dialogue/dialogic relationships with the other. A Bakhtinian dialogue has three constituents: the self, the other, and the relation between them, where the ensuing relationship is the most important of the triad. The dialogic text presupposes previous texts and elicits future responses. A monologic text, on the other hand, is a text that assumes to be the last word, which is a feature of authoritarianism.

1.10.4 Heteroglossia

Heteroglossia is the feature in some literary texts that means they entail a host of overlapping discourses, positioning the text in relation to the world even if the text is read as pure fiction. Some take Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia to mean Intertextuality. On a national level, heteroglossia refers to the conflict between official and unofficial discourses within the same national language. On a micro-linguistic scale, every utterance has within it the trace of other utterances, in both the past and the future. Only primitive and authoritarian discourses are monoglossia. High forms of texts are the discursive site in which the conflict between different voices is at its most. Usually heteroglossia in a text is represented by a hybrid construction which contains two or more discourses. Heteroglossia is a broader term than polyphony. (See Polyphony.)

1.10.5 Language

Language, used to roughly mean discourse, is usually used in Bakhtin to refer to the several different languages that exist simultaneously in a single culture or community where each language has its own worldview. These differences are celebrated by Bakhtin because to communicate with others means to come to terms between one's language and another's language (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* xxxii). These languages should intersect and negotiate. If one language assumes superiority in a given literary text, it is a sign of hegemonic officialdom.

1.10.6 Meaning

To mean is to respond constantly and open-endedly to one's addressivity in the world. Meaning is always in the making. i.e. Bakhtin opposes any suggestion that meaning is fixed in time or space. Meaning is determined by the dialogic give and take between the two, the inside and the outside, the self and the other. What you mean is not only determined by what you intend to mean but also by how others react. Modernist dialogic texts generate more reactions and more meanings.

1.10.7 Otherness

For Bakhtin, Otherness is formed by the speaker's relations to other people, others' words and expressions, and the cultural world in a certain time and place. An ideal dialogic situation determines that the others are active participants in the dialogue rather than passive recipients. The exchange of utterances, therefore, is open to interpretation, contribution, and meaning throughout time and place. (See Dialogism.)

1.10.8 Polyphony

For Bakhtin, Polyphony means "multi-voiced" narratives where conflicting voices and discourses interact and develop on equal terms. Polyphony takes place when a text has a variety of voices, viewpoints, and autonomous characters.

1.10.9 Utterance

An utterance is any unit of language which could be a single word or a whole text. To Bakhtin, the utterance is always an answer to a previous utterance, and always expects or paves the way for an answer in the future.

1.11 Conclusion

A literary text, or any utterance, soon becomes part of the active response in the receiving other; therefore, it shapes itself accordingly and hence neither is the first nor the last word as texts usually engage in responding to future texts and answering previous ones. If there are traces or textual evidence in literary texts that they are interactively dialogic, they "[account] for the constant generation of new meaning," (Morris 5) and thus constantly open up possibilities for more discussions even when time and place change radically. A Bakhtinian exploration of Donne, a poet who lived four hundred years ago, could yield more meanings and grant more profound perspectives into his age. Donne's primary concern showcases certain modes of writing and engages in the cultural dialogue of poetry writing by highlighting aspects of originality and difference usually ignored and marginalised by the authorities of the field, and thus Donne seems to have contributed immensely if not led the process of deinstitutionalisation of English poetry.

To trace what I see as a creative process of poetic resistance in Donne's poetry, perceiving it as interactive dialogic utterances, I shall do this by focusing on the key dialogic Bakhtinian concepts of Intertextuality, Carnival, and Polyphony, dealing first and in most detail with how these relate to the perception of poetry development and consciousness of writing on the margin of the canon and then, in less detail, with how the interaction of writers with opposing ideologies also inform the notions of literary history. A Bakhtinian framework, finally, allows me to address the cultural and socio-political and aesthetic fact of Donne's time and explain how and why Donne managed

to survive all attempts to domesticate, marginalise, and push him to the margin of the canon by rendering him as an abnormal digression. In addition, the framework inspects how Donne's dialogic poetry has helped him resist Jonson's verdict that Donne "would perish". In a word, my thesis does not take for granted concepts such as originality, canon, and sublimity and hypothesises that these terms were abused by the elite to exclude certain writers they did not approve of.



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